

Bury St Edmunds Guildhall

Thanks to a grant of £669,000 from HLF, the ancient fabric of the Guildhall in Bury St Edmunds will be repaired and conserved.

The Guildhall in Bury St Edmunds has been the centre of civic life in the town since the 12th century, and is widely believed to be the oldest civic building standing in England.

The earliest written reference to the Guildhall dates back to 1279, when the *Bury Chronicle* records a visit to the building by Lords John of Cobham and Walter de Heliun, but it was likely over a century old at the time.

The building was erected for the people to use as a meeting place, and throughout the centuries it continued to serve that purpose. Only in the recent past has it fallen into relative disuse.

Regeneration of the Guildhall

Now, thanks to National Lottery players, the Bury St Edmunds Heritage Trust, working in partnership with the Guildhall Feoffment and St Edmundsbury Borough Council, will conserve and refurbish the Guildhall, and open up the building and the surrounding site to the public.

Thanks to a grant of £669,000 from HLF, the ancient fabric of the building will be repaired and conserved, and the main rooms will be prepared as galleries to tell the story of the building as an integral part of the history of the town.

[quote=Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England]“The historic Guildhall heritage centre provides a great insight into the varied heritage of the local area.”[/quote]

In the first floor the former 19th-century Council Chamber will be presented in the form of the Second World War Operations Room which it became in 1939. Here the visitors will be transported back in time to wartime Bury St Edmunds. Meanwhile the outside spaces will be sensitively developed to give access to some interpretation materials, and just somewhere to sit and contemplate.

Volunteers are key to the success of the scheme, with around 80 local volunteers, young and old, expected to be recruited and trained over the course of the project.

Next week the mayor making ceremony will start with a procession leaving the Guildhall. This is a powerful demonstration of the significance of the building to Bury St Edmunds.

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Robyn Llewellyn, Head of HLF East of England, said: “The historic Guildhall heritage centre provides a great insight into the varied heritage of the local area. The fascinating history of the Guildhall and people associated with it will be shared more widely, and HLF are pleased to support this worthwhile project.”

The building is expected to open to the public in July 2018.